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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-12 /071 W
----------017311 271802Z /53
P R 271733Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4310
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 21373

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, GW, UR, WB

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV REMARK ABOUT VISITING BONN "IN
THE NEAR FUTURE"

REFS: (A) BONN 20897 (B) MOSCOW 18505

L. BREZHNEV'S REMARK TO A PRAVDA CORRESPONDENT (REF B)
THAT HE WOULD VISIT THE FRG "IN THE NEAR FUTURE" HAS
STIRRED SOME INTEREST AMONG THOSE FEW GERMAN OFFICIALS

LEFT IN BONN DURING THE HOLIDAY PERIOD. HOWEVER, NO-
BODY IS PREPARED TO GUESS WHAT BREZHNEV MIGHT MEAN SPECI-
FICALLY, AND A FRG CHANCELLERY OFFICIAL HAS TOLD US
THAT THE GERMANS HAVE RECEIVED NO INDICATION THAT THE
SOVIETS HAVE MOVED UP THE DATE OF A PROSPECTIVE VISIT
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OR HAVE EVEN FIXED ONE.

2. A CHANCELLERY OFFICIAL HAS TOLD THE POLITICAL COUN-
SELOR THAT THE CHANCELLERY IS UNABLE TO RELATE
BREZHNEV'S MESSAGE TO ANYTHING THAT HAS COME OUT OF
THE SOVIET UNION THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS. HE SAID THE
FRG HAS RECEIVED NO OFFICIAL INDICATION OF WHEN

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BREZHNEV PLANS OR WISHES TO VISIT. SOME SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAVE INFORMALLY SUGGESTED THE FEBRUARY-MARCH PERIOD, BUT SUCH UNOFFICIAL SUGGESTIONS HAVE BEEN FORTHCOMING FREQENTLY OVER THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF AND HAVE NEVER LED TO ANYTHING CONCRETE.

3. CURIOUSLY, WE PICKED UP LAST WEEK TWO FOREIGN OFFICE RUMORS THAT "SOMETHING BIG" IN THE WAY OF A VISIT TO THE FRG MIGHT COME OFF IN EARLY JANUARY. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM THOSE RUMORS. MOREOVER, CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S TRAVEL SCHEDULE IN THE FIRST PART OF THE MONTH IS JAMMED WITH VISITS TO ROMANIA AND DENMARK. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, IT HAS BEEN OUR IMPRESSION --AS REFLECTED IN REF C--THAT THE SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATION FOR BREZHNEV'S VISIT HERE HAS NOT ADVANCED TO THE POINT WHERE SUCH A VISIT COULD INDEED TAKE PLACE "IN THE NEAR FUTURE" (EXCEPT, OF COURSE, IN HISTORICAL TERMS).

4. WE ARE UNABLE TO ADD MUCH TO THE SPECULATION (REF B) AS TO WHAT BREZHNEV'S PURPOSE MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN MAKING THIS REMARK AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, WE WOULD BE INCLINED TO TIE IT NOT ONLY TO THE RUMORS OF A POSSIBLE SCHMIDT-HONECKER MEETING BUT TO THE WHOLE DRIFT OF FRG POLICY TOWARD EASTERN EUROPE. AS WE INDICATED IN REF A, IT APPEARS THAT SCHMIDT IS FOCUSING HIS
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POLICY MORE ON RELATIONS WITH THE SMALLER STATES OF EASTERN EUROPE RATHER THAN WITH THE SOVIET UNION. BREZHNEV MAY HAVE WANTED TO REMIND EVERYBODY THAT THE

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----------017307 271802Z /53
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 21373

SOVIET UNION IS STILL AROUND AND HAS TO BE RECKONED WITH.

5. SOME GERMAN OFFICIALS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEE A POSITIVE SIGN IN BREZHNEV'S REMARKS, AT LEAST INSOFAR AS THEY SUGGEST BREZHNEV'S GREATER READINESS TO INTEREST HIMSELF IN SOVIET RELATIONS WITH BONN. THE GERMANS BELIEVE THAT GROMYKO AND HIS STAFF TEND TO ACT AS BRAKES ON SOVIET-FRG RELATIONS BY NEGOTIATING ALL ISSUES TO DEATH AND BY A FUNDAMENTALLY NEGATIVE ATTITUDE. BRANDT'S ABORTIVE TRIP TO MOSCOW HAD PROBABLY BEEN INTENDED TO PERSUADE BREZHNEV TO FOCUS ON THIS ISSUE MORE CLOSELY. THE GERMANS MAY HOPE THAT BREZHNEV'S REMARK INDICATES THAT HE WILL NOW DO SO AND THAT HE WILL MAKE A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO GENERATING THE POLITICAL DECISIONS THAT COULD MAKE THE VISIT A SUCCESS.
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6. SPECULATING ON THE ACTUAL TIMING OF BREZHNEV'S VISIT HERE HAS LONG PROVED A FRUITLESS ENTERPRISE. IF THE SOVIETS PERSIST IN THE VIEW THAT BREZHNEV MUST FIRST COME TO AMERICA TO SIGN A SALT AGREEMENT, WE HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING A WINDOW WHEN HE MIGHT VISIT HERE BEFORE JUNE (JUST BEFORE THE ECONOMIC SUMMIT) OR PERHAPS EVEN THE FALL. THE MOST INTERESTING SPECULATION THAT BREZHNEV'S REMARK THEREFORE SUGGESTS IS WHETHER HE MIGHT HAVE DECIDED TO COME HERE BEFORE WASHINGTON.
STOESSEL

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